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## MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON THE SIN PROOF-OF-IDENTITY PROGRAM

OTTAWA--As a result of the federal government's program of decentralization, a person who wants a social insurance number will now be able to apply for it at his or her local unemployment insurance office, instead of having to write to Ottawa. The Honourable Bud Cullen, Minister responsible for the Unemployment Insurance Commission, announced this today. The change is also part of a program to make the application process for the social insurance number simpler and more convenient to the public.

Mr. Cullen said an advertising program has been launched to tell the public about the new system. The advertising also emphasizes that adequate identification must be produced to obtain a social insurance number.

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Since last July, people applying for social insurance numbers have been asked to provide proof of identity and citizenship status when filling in the application form. All unemployment insurance offices are now geared up to help anyone who needs a SIN card. Documents proving applicants' identity and citizenship status will be verified on the spot. "This new procedure will lessen the change of important documents being lost. It will help speed up the application process," said Mr. Cullen.

The social insurance number has been used since 1964. About 7,000 cards are issued every day. To date, 19 million numbers have been issued by Central Index (Ottawa), the centre which sends out SIN cards. With the direct system of validating applications, the government hopes to help prevent misuse of the social insurance number and make it a more valid identifier for government programs.

Applicants must show a primary document proving their identity. Primary documents include the applicant's original birth certificate (a baptismal certificate in Quebec), a citizenship certificate or immigration papers. Secondary documents are also required. They can be any official document with the applicant's name, such as a driver's licence, credit card or school report card.

Applicants who are not citizens or landed immigrants may still need social insurance numbers for tax or business purposes. If in Canada, they will have to show immigration documents as well as the secondary identification. They will be given special numbers beginning with the digit "9". Employers must ask for an employment visa from "9"-number holders who want to work in Canada.

The SIN registration system helps ensure that payments under government programs, such as unemployment insurance, Canada Pension Plan, Quebec Pension Plan and family allowances go only to people who have a right to them. The scheme is also used for Canada Savings Bond interest and income tax returns. "It's the best way to protect the public against misuse of a card that's been stolen, lost or acquired illegally," said Mr. Cullen.

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